

BRIEF NOTE ON THE INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM (IM) SERIES

1948-1950

Paper 11

BRIEF NOTE ON THE INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM (IM) SERIES, 1948-1950<sup>1</sup>

An "Intelligence Memorandum" was an official communication in which the Assistant Director for Reports and Estimates forwarded intelligence to the Director of Central Intelligence. The Assistant Director naturally communicated with his superior on a variety of matters; it was only when he was answering questions or advancing opinions derived from the intelligence research done by his Office, that the result was called an "Intelligence Memorandum."

Aside from this distinction, there was little limitation upon what an Intelligence Memorandum could contain. The form was used: (1) for requests received by the Director himself that did not call for full-fledged estimates (For example, IM-78 of January 17, 1949, concerning possible Soviet penetration of the Latin American West Coast fishing fleet, which resulted from a request to the Director from a Special Assistant to the Under Secretary of State); (2) for similar requests received in the Office of Reports and Estimates (For example, IM-140 of March 3, 1949, concerned with an estimate of the optimum time, for a Soviet point of view, for war to commence; which came in the form of a request directly to the Office of Reports and Estimates from the Joint Intelligence Group); (3) when analysts in the Office of Reports and Estimates believed information in their possession of sufficient importance to be brought to the attention of the Director and others (For example, IM-94 of December 8, 1948, "Matters of possible interest with reference to the visit of President Prío of Cuba" which was furnished voluntarily by the Office of Reports and Estimates for the information of anyone who might have dealings with Prío);

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1. A file of all material in reference is in Historical Files,  
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(4) for publication of bulky reports which were considered too detailed for inclusion in the national estimates series (For example, IM-181 of September 20, 1949, "Resources and Allocations of Steel, Aluminum, Petroleum, Electric Power, and Technical Manpower for the USSR, 1949-1952); and (5) as a means of forwarding national estimates which were considered too urgent to be delayed through inter-agency coordination (For example, IM-304, "Effects of a Voluntary Withdrawal of US Forces from Korea" whose urgent status is attested by its date of publication --- July 10, 1950).

Central Intelligence published 337 Intelligence Memoranda between December 30, 1947 and October 31, 1950: one in 1947, 105 in 1948, 143 in 1949, and 88 during the first ten months of 1950. The 1950 figure would undoubtedly have equalled or exceeded that for 1949 had it not been for the 1950 reorganization which began to take effect in September. After the reorganization, the "IM" series was maintained by the Office of Research and Reports as a means of forwarding economic intelligence.

The origin of the series can be found before December, 1947 in the form of similar communications, which however do not bear an identifying number. The first numbered memorandum is dated December 30, 1947 and is on the subject: "Technical Data, Reference your request dated 16 December 1947." It is followed by "IM-2" dated January 19, 1948 which deals with Soviet deserters in the Western Zones of Germany. It is evident, however, that "IM-numbers" were attached to these memoranda and their successors through No. 69 after they had been written. A regular "IM" form, of which a numbering system was an integral part, first appears with Intelligence Memorandum No. 70, dated October 1, 1948. It would

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appear, in other words, that the decision to give formal status to memoranda of this type was made during the fall of 1948.<sup>1</sup>

In one aspect, the "IM" series was a convenience that probably could not have been avoided in this or some other form, for it was inescapable that requests for information on a variety of topics would come to Central Intelligence, some of which would have to be answered. There having been, in the plans for the Central Reports Staff or its successors, no provision for a channel to take care of these requests, it would undoubtedly have been necessary sooner or later to establish one. Had this been done more deliberately than was the case with the Intelligence Memoranda, the channel might have served the purpose of becoming a repository for material not suited for inclusion in the "ORE" series. The extent of interagency coordination accorded the memoranda in a series of this type would then have been unimportant, since all material included would have come under the heading of "services of common concern" rather than "strategic and national policy intelligence."

The Intelligence Memorandum series, as established, served the purpose of circulating services of common concern, but simultaneously, it served the further purpose, already noted, of providing a means for expeditious delivery of "strategic and national policy intelligence." This development, like the first, was probably inescapable. There were times when an immediate estimate was required. No means had been found<sup>2</sup> of delivering a coordinated paper in less than a week. Before the Intelligence Memoranda became established as a channel for quick delivery of estimates, uncoordinated drafts of Central Intelligence papers had

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- 1, Intelligence Memoranda were officially/established by Annex No. 1 to O.R.E. Operating Procedure No. 21-48 dated 9 April 1948. The description reads as follows:

"a. This type of report is defined as follows - A memorandum for the exclusive purpose of conveying intelligence to the Director of Central Intelligence in order to meet his particular needs.

b. Intelligence Memoranda will be prepared in the form of a "Memorandum for the Director of Central Intelligence" in typescript and will be signed by the Assistant Director for Reports and Estimates. Each such memorandum will be serially numbered consecutively for each calendar year. . . . .

c. An Intelligence Memorandum is usually prepared in response to a specific request from the Director of Central Intelligence but may be submitted on the initiative of Branch or Consultants Panel Chiefs whenever they believe it is needed.

d. The discharge of the responsibility of the Director of Central Intelligence to keep government policy makers informed of foreign developments affecting the national security is an important part of the mission of the Office of Reports and Estimates. This part of the mission of the Office of Reports and Estimates can in no wise be considered as accomplished by the submission of an Intelligence Memorandum but is accomplished only by the preparation and dissemination of other appropriate standard media prescribed by Reference a and by this Operating Procedure."

The item probably referred to in Reference a (O.R.E. Operating Procedure No. 21-48) was that directing presentation of "staff intelligence" in the form of Situation Reports, special reports, and the Estimate of the World Situation, a form of the presentation then planned but not put into practice in that form.

2. Papers like ORE 38-48 "Possible Developments from the Palestine Truce" July 27, 1949 were a rare exception. See Paper No. 6, pp. 31-32

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1. NSCID-1, Paragraphs 4 and 5
2. See DCI 3/1, 8 July 1948, Paragraph 3-e(3) and f

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had been circulated in order to give those who needed them the best available estimate in advance of coordination. Central Intelligence had little choice but to comply when the National Security Council called for an opinion on the spot. The fact, nevertheless, remained, clearly stated in the basic directives, that "intelligence related to the national security", when disseminated must be "officially concurred in by the Intelligence Agencies or shall carry a statement of substantially differing opinions."<sup>1</sup> In spite of special allowances for urgent procedures, furthermore, the Agencies felt strongly on the subject of national intelligence which had been disseminated before they could approve it.<sup>2</sup> Central Intelligence could not comply with requests for an immediate opinion, no matter how urgent the subject, without risking an Agency protest.

Another relevant point should be mentioned. The coordination process (see No. 6) was arduous. Its secondary purpose might be improvement of the form and substance of Central Intelligence estimates, but the result seldom seemed to the authors of the estimates to be commensurate with the effort. Inasmuch as most of those concerned in Central Intelligence took the attitude that they must accept responsibility for the estimates in any case, they were often resistant to the process of coordination as it affected their own papers. Hence, whenever it seemed legitimate to do so, they were likely to favor the use of the "IM" rather than the "ORR" channel. Consequently, there was a considerable body of intelligence in the Intelligence Memorandum series which could give rise to complaints, of greater or less legitimacy, regarding lack of coordination.



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This is not to say that all Intelligence Memoranda eligible for coordination went uncoordinated. There were actually four types in this regard. The first was fully coordinated, with notation of official concurrence or dissent, as in the "ORE" series. The second was published in advance of full coordination but was later coordinated and brought out either as a coordinated "IM", or as an "ORE" estimate. The third was partially coordinated: that is to say, Central Intelligence sought the official concurrence of whichever Agency or Agencies were professionally concerned with the subject matter of the paper in question, but did not seek similar endorsements from the rest. The fourth was not officially coordinated, but the fact was accounted for in such explanatory notes as: "This CIA estimate was prepared in consultation with specialists of the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Air Force"; or "This paper has not been coordinated with the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Army, Navy, and the Air Force".

Uncoordinated Intelligence Memoranda naturally became a subject of protest. (see, for example, paper No. 9, pp.     ) The extent to which these complaints were legitimate would depend on a legal interpretation of the method by which Intelligence Memoranda were handled. They were, as has been noted, always in the form of a memorandum from the Assistant Director for Reports and Estimates to the Director of Central Intelligence. When one of them had been received by the Director, he alone decided what should be done with it. He could read the memorandum for his own information and file it; could share its information orally with those whom he wished to inform of its contents, or could further

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route the document as he saw fit. Normally, in actual practice, Intelligence Memoranda went forward to the Director with a recommended routing suggested by the Office of Reports and Estimates, but he was not obliged to accept it, however, and would, on occasion disregard it entirely or in part.

The question of legitimacy then, concerns the Director's right to disseminate information for there could be little doubt that the Assistant Director might inform his chief, orally or in writing, of any matter he considered of importance. As to the Director's position, it might be argued that it was his duty, on the receipt of any intelligence which in his opinion ought to be brought to the attention of the National Security Council or persons similarly in authority, to impart it without delay. The objection could be raised, however, that when material that the Director proposed to forward took the form of "intelligence related to the national security" he was obliged to include the official concurrence or dissent of the Agencies. The point is discussed at length in the course of the "Central Intelligence Agency as an Instrument of Government 1940-1950." (see Chapter VI, pp. 24-25 for example.

Manifestly, the Intelligence Memorandum Services became the repository for a great deal of miscellaneous material, most of it properly classed as "services of common concern." Enough of it is of real importance, however, to require a thorough searching of the "IM" files in the course of any complete study of intelligence production during 1947-1950.

A list of "IM" titles published from 1947 to 1950 is appended.

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